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ABSTRACT

The general purpose of this investigation is to assess the impact of one and two parent family structures upon the consonance and dissonance of children's attitudes toward authority figures in other institutions; i.e. teachers. A random sample of 200 seventh and eighth grade pupils drawn from two of five public junior high schools in a midwestern community served as the selection pool for this study. From this pool, all students living in one parent families were selected (N=50), and paired on the basis of sex, age in years, socioeconomic status, and race with control "mates" from two parent families. Both subject and control groups responded on scales which assessed overt and covert acceptance/rejection of teachers. These were included within a questionnaire containing a number of items pertaining to their school. The students responded to items ranking: (1) the extent to which they "got along" with their teachers; (2) how interested they felt their teachers were in their doing well in class; (3) whether they felt their teachers were consistently fair or unfair with them; and, (4) whether they felt teachers used grades as a mechanism for revenge. The findings of the study showed a divergence between the overt/covert attitudes of children from one and two parent family structures; the incidence of one parent families is great enough to warrant further research for the development of theory. (Author/JM)

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FAMILY STRUCTURE AND REJECTION OF TEACHER AUTHORITY

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FAMILY STRUCTURE AND REJECTION OF TEACHER AUTHORITY

In an era notable for rapid and often tumultuous change, a quiet revolution has been taking place in the structure of the family in the U.S. Usually ignored, sometimes rationalized, there is nevertheless a clearly discernible trend from the traditionally two parent nuclear family to a one parent structure, evolving almost unnoticed in response, we feel, to the accelerative stimuli of other social changes. The one parent family may be viewed as a response to social change as well as a stimulus for continuing adjustment.

One parent families, vis-a-vis two parent units, representing a changed context of primary socialization, may differentially affect children's attitudes toward other basic institutions within society. The general purpose of this investigation is to assess the impact of one and two parent family structures upon the consonance and dissonance of children's attitudes toward authority figures in other institutions; i.e., teachers.

MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE IN FAMILY STRUCTURE

An examination of statistics on divorce and illegitimacy in the USA indicates a rising proportion of both during the past decade. The increase in the incidence of divorce has been slowly but steadily increasing, year by year, from 2.2 divorces per thousand population in 1960 to 2.9 per thousand U. S. citizens of all ages in 1968 (American Almanac, 1970:47). During the same period and despite the fact that the Sixties have been called the "decade of the Pill", the incidence of illegitimacy showed the same linear pattern of

increase from 5.3 per cent of all live births to 9.0 per cent (American Almanac, 1970a:50).

In 1968, 12 1/2% of the families with children under 18 years of age in the United States were headed by one adult, according to the Bureau of the Census (American Almanac, 1970b:38). This is a proportion whose magnitude results in the one parent family being an important and growing force within and upon society.

FAMILY THEORY AND RESEARCH

Although there is an abundance of both theory and research concerning the family, the emphasis has been on the traditional two parent structure. Powerfully influenced by the model of Parsons and Bales (1955), the effects of parents upon the primary socialization of children has been studied repeatedly in terms of shared parental tasks. As developed by Zelditch (1955:307-351), this model assigns expressive duties to the maternal parent. Her responsibility is delineated as the provision of nurturant attention and affection, of integration within the familial group. Instrumental duties are outlined as being those of the paternal parent, whose major responsibility is to provide for the material well-being of the family. Since fulfillment of this paternal role is accomplished even in very primitive societies through interaction with the extra-familial environment, both physical and social, the paternal parent is viewed as the vital link between the family and the social system in which it exists. It is generally asserted that: (1) family status is derived from the paternal role set; (2) the social perspectives of the father mold the social attitudes of the children; and (3) as instrumental leader of the family, the father maintains final authority.

Interactionist theory has also had a considerable impact on theory and research concerning the family. In a recent survey of the field, Klein, et al (1969) found that 51.8% of the articles on the family published in twelve leading journals between the years of 1962 and 1968 utilized either the Parsonian structural-functionalist or the interactionist theoretical-conceptional frameworks. However, due to a lack of definitive work the utility of either framework in examining the emerging one parent pattern of inter- and intra-familial relationships is essentially heuristic. This is in part the result of so little attention given to the one parent family. For example, very little attention has been given to the combining of parental role requirements, a necessary responsibility of the lone parent. Again, little is known about the effects upon children when their physical and emotional security is dependent upon the stability of a family relationship founded upon the presence of one adult instead of two. As another consequence of the limited research on one parent families distinctly different perspectives have emerged.

One such perspective (Glasser and Navarre, 1965:98-109) sees the one parent family as a convergence of the narrowing of traditional kinship patterns which is, in turn, a corollary to the spatial mobility required of members of modern technological societies. Because 90% of all lone parents are women, this perspective surmises that the child of the one parent family may have such personality defects as: (1) perceiving the social world with sexually distorted vision resulting in sex-role confusion; (2) self-concept and status ambivalence; (3) non-adaptive peer group relationships, and (4) abnormal dependence on adult support, tending to increase adolescent conflict. This approach sees the lone parent burdened with double and

conflicting, but unsupported parental roles. The single parent may thus tend to neglect and/or reduce adequacy of performance in one or both roles, resulting in even further distortion of the child's social perceptions.

The Glasser and Navarre (1965) perspective has not been noteworthy in generating research. Indeed the only obvious feature of research contrasting the effects of one parent families with those of two parent families is its paucity. The interested researcher must look to the literature in rather diverse areas, i.e., social problems, deviant behavior, marital relationships, and employed women. Such findings as are available often must be interpreted inferentially as having relevance for understanding the one parent family structure. These findings indicate contradictory and often ambiguous conclusions.

The position that the one parent family structure may have adverse effects upon the children appears to be supported by data obtained on families of schizophrenics by Lidz and associates in 1949. (Lidz, in Bell and Vogel; 1968:650). They reported that 61% of the patients suffering from this extreme form of social withdrawal were from broken or unhappy family backgrounds. It was indicated that the "most consistent etiology of schizophrenia is pathology of the family environment."

In a case study approach utilizing a relatively small sample of unwed mothers, Vincent (1969) found that 56% of his subjects came from broken homes. Not impressed with the family members who normally are highly significant during the years of childhood, the subjects became intensely oriented to a peer group during adolescence. When they found no ready acceptance by this group, these girls tended to use an extreme of feminine obedience behavior in order to elicit love, affection, and protection from males in what Vincent

interpreted as a foredcomed search for a substitute father-image.

Vincent agrees with L. Young (1969a:118) that:

> "If one factor can be considered fundamental in the family background of unwed mothers, it is the consistent pattern of dominance of the home by one parent . . . usually the mother."

More recently, Vincent has participated in a study of three-generational patterns of illegitimacy which involved 1032 black females in a metropolitan area in North Carolina. (Vincent, et.al., 1969:659-667) This study shows a rising patterns of illegitimacy from generation to generation with a highly significant affirmation of their hypothesis that "illegitimacy runs in families."

In studying the effects of family environment upon delinquency, Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck (1962) compared the personal attributes of 500 delinquent boys, ranging in age from seven to seventeen years, with matched non-delinquent boys. The emphasis of their report was on the "psychologic and physiologic traits and the specific factors in the environment which occur more frequently among delinquents than among non-delinquents." They reported that 60.6% of their delinquent subjects came from families in which there was a severed conjugal relationship, a difference of 26.4% from that of non-delinquents with a like family background.

In a summary of eight studies made during the 50 year period from 1899 to 1949 (Shulman, 1961:476-77) it was indicated that a consistently higher percentage of female delinquents come from backgrounds of broken homes than do males. The proportion of male delinquents from broken homes ranged from 14 to 54 % with a median of 34.5% for all studies; for girls who engaged in delinquent behavior, from 38 to 68% came from broken homes--the overall median was 51%

A similar percentage was reported in a 1964 assessment of the self concepts of school dropouts in Modesto, California. Results showed that 64% of the girls and 48% of the boys who dropped out of high school were from broken homes; on the other hand, only 15% of the girls and 28% of the boys who graduated were from similarly structured family environments.

A comparison of studies on dropouts made by the Alabama State Department of Education in 1964 and the Los Angeles City School District in 1965 shows almost uniform relationships between dropping out of school and family background. Forty-two per cent of the students leaving school in Alabama were not living with both parents of procreation and 43% were from homes without both natural parents in Los Angeles (Schreiber, 1969:314).

On the other hand, studies of employed mothers (who also are "burdened with double, and conflicting, parental roles") show little or no effect upon their children. For example: A study by Nye and his associates found no significant differences in nervous symptoms, anti-social or withdrawing behavior between children of working mothers and those of mothers who were not employed. (Nye, et al., 1963).

Hoffman (1961:357-371) concluded that differences manifested in the behaviors of children of working mothers were related more to the mother's attitude toward her employment than to her absence from the home. In a study of child adjustment in instances when the mother held a positive attitude toward her work, Hoffman found their children to be significantly less successful in their attempts at peer group acceptance than children of non-working maternal parents. Children whose mothers held a negative attitude toward their outside employment manifested lower frustration levels and more physical aggression; sons exhibited more teacher dependence than did peers whose mothers were not employed. (Hoffman, 1968:353-360).

No significant differences in dependency or aggression were found in matched groups of children of working and non-working mothers in a study by Siegel, et al. (Nye-Hoffman, 1963a:67-81).

Burchinal's investigation (Nye-Hoffman, 1963b:106-110) of the personality or school adjustment characteristics of white children from intact families also found the by now familiar "no significant differences" to exist between children of employed and non-employed maternal parents.

Goode (1956) concluded that most divorced mothers felt that their children were better off in a tranquil one parent environment than they had been in the antecedent atmosphere of marital conflict.

Further support for Goode's position was provided by a 1957 study by Nye (1957:356-361) who found that, in 13 or 21 measures, adolescents from broken homes were better adjusted than those from unhappy but intact family backgrounds. Neither Goode nor Nye, however, made comparisons with children from home environments which could be rated as "normal" in marital contentment.

THE DYADIC RELATIONSHIP: A PERSPECTIVE ON THE ONE PARENT FAMILY

It is the purpose of this study to examine varying theoretical patterns of early adolescent responses to adult authority figures outside of the family. It is proposed that there may be differences in the extent to which an age cohort from one and two parent families view teachers as hostile, rejecting, and unfair (a covert attitude) while simultaneously expressing acceptance of them (an overt behavior). In other words, the disjuncture between attitudes and behavior for children from one parent families may be substantively different from that of children from intact families.

While the traditional nuclear family contains within its structure both dyadic and multiple permutations (Bossard, 1945:292-294) which may become dysfunctional in stressful circumstances, these are normally wholesome.

Further, these may change through time in response to the developing social identifications of the child as he experiences an expanding social world; the child's development occurs within the context of security inherent in the larger family group. This cannot be true to the same degree in the one parent family. Through its very structure and definition, the single parent family is a permanently dyadic and generational relationship of child and parent, a permanent interaction of follower and leader.

Because it is a relationship of intense but insecure interaction in an irreplaceable membership structure, the dyad contains two disparate potentials: (1) the optimum conditions for the internalization of parental values, since nurturance and discipline necessarily come from a single source (Slater, 1964:364), as well as (2) the seeds of anxiety, rigidity, and repressed hostility (Coser, 1964:60-85).

A stable group (e.g., a primary group) must be large enough to furnish an outlet for freedom of both positive and negative emotional expression. To provide this outlet, the group's size should allow flexibility to the extent that the loss of one of its members can be tolerated but not ignored. The dyadic lone parent-child relationship does not approach this criterion.

In consequence, the child of the one parent family may be denied the customary physical and emotional support accorded children by the structure of the two parent family. This may hinder the development of the "basic trust" which Erik Erikson has called the "first component of a healthy personality." (Erikson, 1955:55) and which Bettelheim has described as "the ground rock of all later trust in others (including one's teachers) and in oneself (so vital in attacking problems) . . ." (Bettelheim, 1968:215).

As a further consequence of the unique dyadic pattern of the one parent family, adult authority is represented to the child in the form of his single

parent. Such a parent, lacking the emotional outlets of the double parent coalition, may create malevolence in the child through inconsistent treatment brought about as a result of the parent's own deprivation of basic need satisfaction.

The dyadic family may escape this tendency; but the child's achievement of personal autonomy may still be impeded by his perception of his parent as personifying authority, for the child may come to resent a parent whose personal power is perceived as undemocratic and tyrannical. This irritation may tend to remain unresolved because of the intense need of the small child to maintain the stability of his family relationship. In addition, it may be extended over time to other persons whom the child perceives as similar to the authoritative parent--the initial source of both frustration and security-need satisfaction. (Burgess, 1963:390).

Concomitantly, his chronic anxiety--internalized in his dyadic group of primary socialization and influenced by his need for expanding social interaction--may cause him to seek affiliation with these same adult figures (Schachter, 1959) and suppress overt manifestation of his hostility. Children from two parent families, on the other hand, may be less likely to experience this ambivalence toward adult authority and will, therefore, regard their teachers with both overt and covert consistency of acceptance or rejection.

METHOD

A random sample of 200 7th and 8th grade pupils drawn from two of five public junior high schools in a midwestern community served as the selection pool for this study. From this pool, all students living in one parent

families were selected (N - 30), and paired on the basis on sex, age in years, socio-economic status and race with control 'mates' from two parent families.

The students live in a midwestern industrial city of slightly over 200,000. Since the school population which the two schools serve is logically a representative cross section of the community, the sample includes children from widely diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and spans the thenic and racial neighborhoods of the city.

In order to elicit frank responses from the subjects, no names were used on the measuring instruments and the subjects were assured that individual questionnaires would not be made available to persons outside the research group. The tests were administered to the subjects within a larger group of students in the selection pool, thus providing an atmosphere in which the subjects would be most likely to feel that their responses could be given with anonymity.

Both subject and control groups responded on scales which assessed overt and covert acceptance/rejection of teachers. These were included within a questionnaire containing a number of items pertaining to their school. The students responded to items ranking (1) the extent to which they "got along" with their teachers, (2) how interested they felt their teachers were in their doing well in class, (3) whether they felt their teachers were consistently fair or unfair with them, and (4) whether they felt teachers used grades as a mechanism for revenge.

Subjects in each category of family structure were designated as accepting or rejecting of teachers according to the position of their response scored above or below the mean after the response frequencies on the acceptance-rejection items had been converted to percentages. Overall

proportional chi-squares were first calculated, followed by the application of the same statistical technique using the variables of race, sex, and socio-economic status as controls.

FINDINGS

Perhaps the most surprising finding as shown in Table 1 is the difference in magnitude of ambivalence toward their teachers as reported by the pre-adolescent subjects from one parent backgrounds and those from traditionally structured families.

(Table 1 about here)

Table 1 indicates that the pattern of subject responses was in the direction hypothesized for both attitudinal combinations. The disparity in consistency between overt and covert attitudes exists according to family type with one parented subjects reporting significantly more dissonance in their overt/covert attitudes. Perhaps the overt behavior of the child from the two parent family is a manifestation of his inner feelings while that of the child from the one parent family may indicate only his intense need for affiliation.

It may be that the 18% of the one parented subjects who report overt rejection and covert acceptance of teachers have a dependent orientation toward a peer group which includes members some of whom are consistent and some inconsistent in their rejection of authority figures. Those who are inconsistent may be 'caught' in an overt pattern of behavior that is a group norm rather than a manifestation of personal values. The 32% who report covert rejection and overt acceptance may be more dependent than both their one and two parented peers on adult provided security.

The differing degree of consistency between overt and covert attitudes of the subjects when race is used as a control variable is shown in Table 2.

(Table 2 about here)

While the overall findings are significant in the direction hypothesized, a comparison of all Black subjects with all White subjects indicates interesting racial differences in overt attitude toward adult authority figures. The findings indicate a differential in overt/covert attitude related to family structure, i.e., the one or two parent familial patterns, over and above race alone as a causal variable.

As Table 3 shows, the directional pattern relating family structure and consistency of overt and covert attitudes still obtains when sex is controlled.

(Table 3 about here)

An interesting disclosure of the analytical results is the fact that all female subjects appear to be both the more ambivalent and more rejecting in attitudes toward teachers than are males.

It may be that the rejecting attitudes of girl students reflect the greater degree of social conformity required of girls, possibly adding to a greater degree of hostility. A less dramatic but perhaps more valid inference might concern differential rates of maturation. Since most girls of junior high age have attained puberty, often several years before their masculine cohorts, the findings may indicate a developmental stage of adolescent independency conflict which the boys have not attained.

Table 4 reports results of the study's comparison with socio-economic status controlled.

(Table 4 about here)

The same general pattern of greater consistency of overt and covert attitudes is indicated by children from two parent families. A comparison of the response patterns of the lower and the middle class subjects indicates lower class children from both one and two parent families to be more overtly rejecting of their teachers than are middle class children. Perhaps this overt rejection is a reflection of parental attitudes. Perhaps it reflects the attitudes of the teachers.

In all comparisons involving consistency of overt and covert attitudes, greater dissonance may be observed among the subjects from one parent families. With the exception of male and lower class subjects as groups, expectations concerning one and two parent family structures as determinants of overt and covert rejection/acceptance were confirmed by the direction and scope of the findings.

THEORETICAL AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study show a divergence between the overt/covert attitudes of children from one and two parent family structures too marked to be ignored. The differences in the student responses are too consistent to be unrelated to differing family patterns.

The students selected for this study were not little children several years away from full membership in society. They were, instead, early adolescents, entering the period of dependence/independence conflict which is the crucible of ambivalent emotions in which adult roles and attitudes are moulded shortly to affect society with progressively greater influence.

With adolescence perhaps, the pressures of dissonance mount, creating a matching drive to reduce the intense inconsistency which may be expressed with sudden and correspondingly intense action to gain consonance equilibrium

or to avoid the continuation of dissonance tension.

Viewed from the perspective of dissonance theory, the subjects of the study manifesting acceptance/rejection inconsistency between overt behavior and covert attitudes are living with two cognitive elements which are not likely to coexist compatibly; therefore they may be predicted to be approaching a time for choosing one over the other.

Their choices may take various forms as these are influenced by intervening variables of social interaction and circumstances:

(1) They may choose to avoid further dissonance occasioned by the objects of their displaced and adolescent hostility - their teachers - and become truants or quietly drop out of school when they are legally able.

(2) They may seek out other persons whose values will give social support to both their dependency needs and to the selection of a consonant set of values which may or may not be within the range of social acceptability, depending upon the group in which they find acceptance.

(3) Their social dependence or their perception of eventual reward may force a change in attitude which will lessen their hostility.

(4) They may have suffered such a degree of dissonance that they have become incapable of choice in an "anticipatory avoidance reaction" to the possibility of new dissonances to be experienced with any change in situation, preferring to live with familiar pain rather than to hazard an unknown. (Festinger, 1957, 1962, 1963, 1965, 1966).

Festinger has called the last of these "the inability to commit oneself behaviorally," a passive and negative life style which, in its extreme form, is pathological.

It would seem that the incidence of one parent families is certainly great enough to warrant further research for the development of theory. For example, findings of this study warrant the further investigation of the effects of age level. According to the theoretical orientition guiding this study, dissonant adolescents are likely to become more consistent in

their attitudes of overt and covert acceptance or rejection of their teachers over time. Sibling interaction and birth order also deserve analyses as possible mediators of d[illegible] intensity and preceived parental inconsistency for children of one parent families. In addition, an exploration of the weight of parental values is suggested by the rejection level for children of both one and two parent families from the lower socio-economic strata, for these children may be reflecting the similar social responses of their parents.

Given more definitive research support, the relevance of family structure may merit attention by those concerned with educational policy. It is doubtful that optimum learning can occur when pupils regard their instructors with either overt or covert attitudes of rejection. Perhaps rejection might be counteracted by increased employment of males in pre-school and elementary programs, lowered pupil-teacher ratios, and personalized counselling on all grade levels.

Family structure may also be a relevant consideration for informal socialization programs like those of the YMCA and the YWCA, Boy and Girl Scouts, and the Camp Fire Girls. It may be that the needs of children require youth organizations which will provide diffuse interaction with adults within groups much smaller than those presently provided.

Finally, it would seem that the one parent family has reached a condition of normalcy within society which warrants societal attention in terms of counselling, adult education, and child care centers which can be supportive of the lone parent, thus enabling him to provide a healthy family environment for his children.

Table 1: Overt and Covert Acceptance/Rejection of Teachers: One and Two Parent Families

Family Structure	Overt Rejection Covert Acceptance		Overt Rejection Covert Rejection		Overt Acceptance Covert Acceptance		Overt Acceptance Covert Rejection	
One Parent	a.	18%	b.	24%	c.	26%	d.	32%
Two Parent	e.	12%	f.	36%	g.	32%	h.	20%

H_{R1}: f + g > b + c (sig. finding)

H_{R2}: d > h (sig. finding)

Table 2: Overt and Covert Acceptance/Rejection of Teachers, One and Two Parent Families: Controlling for Race

Family Structure and Race*	Overt Rejection Covert Acceptance		Overt Rejection Covert Rejection		Overt Acceptance Covert Acceptance		Overt Acceptance Covert Rejection	
One Parent								
Black	a.	15%	b.	31%	c.	15%	d.	39%
White	e.	18%	f.	22%	g.	30%	h.	30%
Two Parent								
Black	i.	8%	j.	62%	k.	15%	l.	15%
White	m.	14%	n.	30%	o.	38%	p.	18%

* Insufficient number of subjects from families other than white or black to analyze.

H_{R3}: $j + k > b + c$ (sig. finding)

H_{R4}: $d > l$ (sig. finding)

H_{R5}: $n + o > f + g$ (sig. finding)

H_{R6}: $h > p$ (sig. finding)

Table 3: Overt and Covert Acceptance/Rejection of Teachers, One and Two Parent Families: Controlling for Sex.

Family Structure and Sex	Overt Rejection Covert Acceptance		Overt Rejection Covert Rejection		Overt Acceptance Covert Acceptance		Overt Acceptance Covert Rejection	
One Parent								
Male	a.	14%	b.	27%	c.	41%	d.	18%
Female	e.	21%	f.	21%	g.	15%	h.	43%
Two Parent	i.	4%	j.	36%	k.	46%	l.	14%
	m.	18%	n.	40%	o.	21%	p.	21%

H_{R5}: j + k > b + c (not sig.)

H_{R5a}: d > l (not sig.)

H_{R5}: n + o > f + g (sig. finding)

H_{R5a}: h > p (sig. finding)

Table 4: Overt and Covert Acceptance/Rejection of Teachers: One and Two Parent Families Controlling for Socio-Economic Status.

Family Structure and Socio-Economic Status	Overt Rejection Covert Acceptance	Overt Rejection Covert Rejection	Overt Acceptance Covert Acceptance	Overt Acceptance Covert Rejection
One Parent				
Lower Class	a. 18%	b. 32%	c. 23%	d. 27%
Middle Class	e. 17.5%	f. 17.5%	g. 29%	h. 36%
Two Parent				
Lower Class	i. 14%	j. 36%	k. 36%	l. 14%
Middle Class	m. 11%	n. 39%	o. 29%	p. 21%

H_{R6}: j + k b + c (sig. finding)

H_{R6a}: d i (not sig.)

H_{R7}: n + o f + g (sig. finding)

H_{R7a}: h p (sig. finding)

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